

**A
SONG OF CHARITY**

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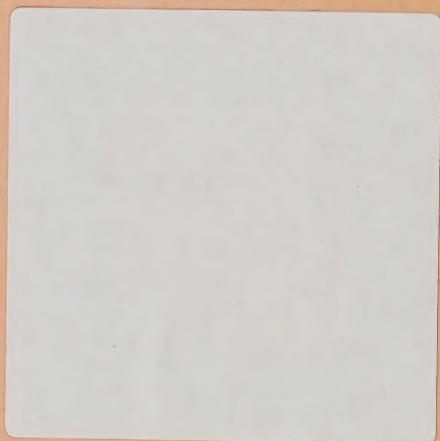
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A SONG OF CHARITY.



A

SONG OF CHARITY.

(Edward John Chapman)

"And now abideth Faith, Hope,
Charity, these three; but the greatest
of these is Charity."—ST. PAUL.

[CANADIAN EDITION.]

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63/3
TO HIS KIND FRIENDS
IN ORILLIA, CANADA WEST,

This Poem,

[COMPOSED IN CHIEF PART, DURING A SUMMER'S HOLIDAY, ON THE
WATERS AND AMIDST THE ISLETS OF LITTLE LAKE COUCHICHING.]

IS INSCRIBED,

WITH ALL REGARD,

BY ITS AUTHOR.

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A SONG OF CHARITY.

1.

THE FOREST.

The Forest's faery solitude,
The violet's haunt be mine :
Where call the free in merry mood
From dawn till day's decline !
All gentle creatures gather there
From leafy nest and mossy lair :
The little snakelet, golden and green,
The pointed grass glides swift between ;
And there the quaint-eyed lizards play
Throughout the long bright summer-day—
Under the leaves in the gold sun-rain,
To and fro, they gleam and pass,
As the soft wind stirs the grass :
A moment, and then sleeps again.

And there, the noontides, dream the deer
Close couch'd, where, with crests upcurled,
The fragrant ferns a forest rear
Within the outer forest-world.

And many a petalled star peeps through
The ferny brake, when breathe anew
The soft wind-pantings. And there too,
The hare and the tiny leveret

Betake them, and their fears forget—

Lazily watching with soft brown eye

The laden bees go sailing by,

With many a bright-winged company

Of glittering forms that come and go,

Like twinkling waves in ceaseless flow,

Across those dreamy depths below.

And high above on the bending bough,

Its gush of song unloosens now

Some forest-bird. Wild, clear, and free

Upswells the joyous melody

In proud, quick bursts : and then, anon,

In the odorous silence, one by one

The thick notes drop, but do not die

For through the hush, the soul keeps on
With a music of its own—
So runs the forest minstrelsy !
One other sound there soundeth only
Out of the distance dim and lonely :
Out of the pine-depths, murmuring ever,
Floweth the voice of the flowing river :
“ Hither ”—so seemeth it—“ Hither, O ye !
Whose toil is over, whose task is done,
Whose soul the wearisome world would shun—
Come hither to me ! ”

What is she who cometh here :
Never heeding, scarcely knowing
Whither her lost steps are going—
Like a leaf that hath grown sere
Even while summer winds are blowing,
And is drifted up and down :
Such is she who cometh here :
One to loving hearts once dear,
But now a thing forlorn to see :
Hounded by the unpitying frown

Of a cold world's cruelty—
Such is she who cometh here !

O pale, sad lips, once softly-tinted
As though the Morn had there imprinted
His purple kisses, lovingly—
O pale, sad cheek, once smile-arrayed—
Sweet lips, whose music merry made
The mournfullest places—can it be
That all is changed so utterly !
Once radiant—as one divine,
And now !—thou hapless Madeline,
What change is this : what fate is thine !
Though still the rich fair silken tress
Retains its ancient loveliness,
Yet on that brow and in those eyes,
The soul's calm light no longer lies ;
But in its place, and deep below,
A weary ache that will not go.

She is sitting on a stone
Beneath yon odorous linden-tree,

Listlessly—but not alone,
For, hark ! a little feeble moan
Calls back her dream-thoughts suddenly.
And hidden half in her embrace,
Peers forth a little suffering face :
A little face full sad to see,
So shrunken and sharp with misery.

O thought of horror—come not again !
Wouldst thou madden her wretched brain —
Though every cruel hope be gone,
It is so dear, that dearest one :
She cannot, cannot wish it dead !
But in her breast the spring is dry
That once could still its famished cry,
And who will give them bread ?

She clasps it with a frantic fear,
With sickening fear, and sudden start—
And words of terrible agony,
As on the the ground down-kneeleth she,
Break forth from her tortured heart.

“ O let my cry come unto thee !
O Lord of Mercy, for thy loving Son,
Have mercy on this guiltless one
Who is so dear, so dear to me ! ”

II.

THE ORPHAN.

When Madeline was yet too young
To feel their loss or heed it long,
Her parents died—almost together,
Struck by swift fever, the same hour :
And in the same grave, under the heather
Foxglove and harebell, and a shower
Of soft star-daisies, there they sleep—
Upon the verge of the echoing sea,
Whose waves almost to the church-yard creep
With low soft moanings, ceaselessly.
Sad is thy voice, O Sea, to hear :
Solemn and sad, but very dear :
For all men love thee, thou echoing Sea !

Low moaned afar the coming gale :
The flapping of the eager sail,

Deaf to mute prayers, the signal gave—
And like a creature of the sea,
The proud ship met the breasting wave
All joyously !
But Madeline, through gathering tears,
Beheld her home of happy years,
Windmill and spire and rocky shore,
Fade in the distance more and more,
Until the mingling sea and sky
Hid all ; and cold reality
Again became a presence. Thus,
The little orphan child was thrown
Into the wide world, all alone :
The wide world, cold and perilous.

They sent her o'er the parting seas
To an old convent, dark and grim,
At the foot of the Spanish Pyrennees :
For pale of cheek and weak of limb
Was she in that young morning hour.
But soon the soft clime's soothing power
Won to her cheek a tardier bloom,
And saved her for a sadder doom.

And summer and winter went and came
Day after day, ever the same,
Through a few brief years revolving,
Dream-like each into each dissolving,
With scarce remembered links between
The close of each unvaried scene.
And Madeline's bright child-beauty grew
(Like some long unregarded flower
Bursting its soft green prison through)
Into a girlhood—ah, more fair
Than ever poet's visions were
Of her he loved in life's young hour !

No kindred hearts were there to greet
With quickening pulse and loving beat
The young girl's growing sympathies :
And so, in weary want of these,
And in her soul-sick solitude,
A close companionship she made
With all that bloomed in bower and glade.
And from the lonely chestnut-wood
Comfort and wondrous love she drew :
And gentle loving names had she

For all that in the greenwood grew ;
Where moss, and leaf, and herb upspringing,
Set the bells of her soul a-ringing
With a wild weird melody.
And soon those gay nut-loving thieves,
The quick-eyed squirrels, feared her not—
But peeped upon her, and forgot
To hide themselves amongst the leaves.
And shy bright birds would come at last
And take the food from out her hand :
The very lizards as she passed,
Would look at her, and understand
They need not fly from one so fair.
And she had other playmates too,
That seemed her gentle touch to woo :
Bright things of joy that clustered there,
And lured her to their haunts away ;
And with their radiant fairy bloom,
Like stars within the twilight gloom,
Made all the pathways glad and gay.
O dear were ye, ye tender flowers,
The nurslings of her forest hours !

But still, though fair the world around,
A secret want her spirit found ;
The haunting of an unreal pain
That came and went, and came again,
And often like a shadow lay
Upon her heart the livelong day ;
And swayed it still with strange sweet power
In the rapt midnight's starry hour—
Passing into the dream-world then
Hand in hand with that maiden fair ;
And wherever their footsteps seemed to tread,
Out of the dull earth, dusty and dead,
Bright flowers burst on the fainting air
With odorous breathings ! Everywhere
A tender radiance wrapped the ground,
Like that which flows from the floating moon :
And the soul at every sight and sound
Was stirred by some unknown emotion—
But softly, like a dreaming ocean
Under the warm soft breath of June.
And ever, as it lingered near,
The voice and the kiss of the whispering breeze

Seemed filled with the far-off melodies
Of some diviner sphere !

She knew not what this haunting was
That came and went, but would not pass
Entirely from her heart away.
This mingled sense of joy and sadness,
That spoke in every budding spray,
In every cloud that o'er her flew,
In every lowly flower that grew
Between the knotted roots around—
In every soft and summer sound
The old Earth gave in its proud gladness—
And in the wind as it swept along
Followed by leafy murmurings ;
And in the wild bird's joyous song,
And the voice of the hidden springs—
Only heard when all was still,
When the wind and the bird like playmates gay
Had chased each-other, away, away,
Up and over the round green hill !

Thus passed away her girlhood's hour
From year to year, whilst o'er her soul
The promptings of that unknown power
Still held companionless control ;
When, with a sense almost of pain
She sought her native shores again :
For those old woods she left behind,
And glade and glen and rocky stream,
With spirit-spells had intertwined
Their forms around the living dream
Of her existence. Day by day
She knew them on her silent way ;
And when the wind all softly stirr'd
The forest branches to and fro,
Voices loving and kind she heard,
As of old friends lost long ago.
And thus it grieved her gentle heart
From those familiar scenes to part ;
But, as her last look on them fell—
Where, fruited thick, the hawthorn bush
Filled all the wood with its crimson blush,
And turned the road beyond the dell—
The fancy to her thought would come

That in years hence some other maiden
Parted from her childhood's home,
With weary heart all sorrow-laden—
Some other solitary one—
Might draw from them, as she had done,
A joy and solace all her own !

III.

THE LOVERS.

“ Whither wanderest thou,
O wind—with thy dreamy sighing ?
Take from my lips and brow
The kiss and thought, and speed thee now
To her, though unreplying :
And let thy soft breath’s passionate power
Tell of a joy divine :
The memoried joy of one bright hour
That once was mine, was mine ! ”

Who murmureth thus to the lonely night
And to the lonely sea,
And to the stars with loving gleam ?
Is it not he—’tis he,
The waking joy of that wild dream,
The one sole thought, the one delight,

That grew, and gave no room for more,
In Madeline's unwatchful heart !
If but his voice she chanced to hear,
Or felt she that his step drew near,
The warm quick blood would leap and start
With soft betrayal to her cheek,
Then leave it paler than before.
And though with innocent maiden guile
She ever strove to look and speak
The colder for that inward feeling :
Many a tender truant tone
And look and word, the truth revealing,
Told of that she would not own
Even to herself the while.

He had passed a restless Youth
With kindred spirits in Italy.
A worshipper of that old truth
Aye kept alive by Poesy,
He was not one to bend the knee
To this false world's philosophy.
And thus, when swift the summons sped
Through the waked heart of that old land,

Proudly he fought and proudly bled
For the one common cause—but when
Her limbs were wrapped in their shroud again,
And that bright flame, too quickly fanned,
Was quenched in blood : all bitterly
He turned him from the rampant wrong,
The right conceded to the strong,
The ghastly lie that outraged faith
And palled the soul in living death—
And sought again his distant home,
Where freedom's breath might freely come
Across the sheltering sea.

The ship is moored : his comrades gone :
And on the solitary strand
Like a shored weed he stands alone.
For all it was his native land
There seemed not in its fair breadths one
To heed his coming or to care
That he again was standing there.
And yet, perdy ! how brief awhile
Had sped since Beauty's chariest smile

Was all for him ! and round him hung
A ready crowd with flattering tongue :
Fair-seeming friends, yet false to the core,
As many had found, good sooth, before,
When all their gold was gone. And he—
'Twas the old tale—soon found the same,
When that mad stream of revelry
Had swallowed all ! But in that hour
Of self-distrust and grief and shame,
His soul looked forth, and felt its power,
And sought at once a nobler aim
In other lands, where he might yet
The bitter-fruited past forget—
In the rich fields of classic lore,
In nature's ever-yielding store,
And in the proud pursuit of arms
For eager youth beyond all charms
The home-world offers. 'Thus he went
Upon his self-sought banishment.
Old Heidelberg, thy student-towers
Retained him first : and dear the hours
He passed beside the Neckar-stream
In quiet study, thought, and dream.

Then France his wandering footsteps won
And almost claimed him for her own :
For passed he with her fiery bands
At trumpet-call to Afric's sands,
And shared in many a toilsome day,
And midnight watch, and morning fray.
And many a fallen comrade laid
To his long rest, beneath the shade
Of the tall date-palm—far away
From those, who by the gay Garonne,
Blue-bosomed Loire, or winding Seine,
Oft talk of him when day is done,
And watch along the road in vain
The loved-one's coming. Till at last,
When Hope's last hope is ebbing fast,
Some toil-worn soldier journeying by,
Draws rein before the joyless home—
“ Maiden, from far Algiers I come :
He sends you this—I saw him die !
I held him as his eye grew dim,
But 'twas a glorious hour for him :
He murmured France, and Victory !

And one loved name I need not tell,
Was mingled with his last farewell.”
Then stooping, on that hand of stone
His lip he presses, and is gone—
Gone like a dream ! But ah, not one,
Whose grief the joyous morn dispels :
For it there comes no joyous sun ;
But ever a sound of funeral bells
Rings in the soul through the night’s dread calm,
And through the long long weary day—
A dirge for the dead so far away,
Under the shadowy palm !

Then came our wanderer at last
To thee, thou loveliest Italy !
He came, and gave his heart to thee,
Thou daughter of the glorious Past !
Fair land, where Art and Nature strive
To keep the enthralled soul alive ;
And guard and fan the failing fire,
So that it shall not all expire.
Where sculptured arch and columned wall
Still bridge the gulf of days gone by ;

And sea, and sky, and mountains—all
Breathe out a quenchless prophecy :
It is decreed : thou shalt not die !
It may be yet long years and years
That thou must bear with bitter tears
The despot's wrong, the stranger's sway ;
But in the womb of time, a day
Is quickened, and shall dawn at length
When thou shalt rise, and with calm strength,
All youth-renewed, thy rights resume :
No more a mourner by the tomb
Of hopes and glories lost and gone ;
But garlanded with gay bride-flowers ;
And led by all the joyous hours
Back to thy promised throne.

But many a mournful sacrifice
The intervening days of ill
Must bring to thee, thou Sad One, still :
Where fear, with foul life-robbing lies
And crafty wile and legal juggle,
Is ever on the watch to fill
The prison graves with all who bear

A patriot's semblance, or appear
Too noble for the oppressor's will.
And many an unsuccessful struggle,
Urged on too soon, must yet arise
With all its ghastly miseries.
Woe to the vanquished ! Those who lie
In their red graves all peacefully
Under the broad blue heaven's smile,
Though sorrowing hearts may weep awhile,
Ah, their's, it is a happy lot :
It is for those who yet remain,
For those who have fought, and fallen not,
The earth gives out its cry of pain—
Woe to the vanquished ! None may save
The lost ones from their living grave !
Where fear and wrong go hand in hand,
Alas, they form a cruel pair :
They know not what it is to spare,
Who rule in that unhappy land.

A few brief days of glorious hope,
And then the banded Austrian came :

None faltered, but 'twas vain to cope
With those foul hosts to whom the name
Of freedom was a word unknown.
But it was over ! The stumbling throne
Was propped anew ; and thus again,
When further hope had failed to brave,
Our exile crossed the sheltering wave
And sought in long-untrodden ways
The home he yet might call his own :
All that did to him remain
Out of that wreck of earlier days.

A little spot, a rocky glade
Whose shores the deep blue sea embayed
With darkest fringe of oak and fir,
By better feeling had been stayed
From falling to the usurer.
A sacred spot : a home held dear
To his dead father's memory :
For he was born beneath the shade
Of those old trees so bent and sere.
And there, with its stonework tracery

The quaint old house, as old as they,
Still stood, and kept from year to year
With storm and frost and slow decay,
A struggle for the mastery.

To this lone spot, in his lone mood
He came : and in its solitude,
Its antique gloom and quietness,
He found the calm his spirit sought
A refuge from the restlessness,
That fed upon his every thought.
And his domain was the old oak wood
Whose giant trunks all thickly stood
Around the house, and stretched away
For many a rood along the bay.
And the broad bright sands of the lonely shore
Where soundeth ever the deep sea-roar—
For only down in the rock-bound bay
Break in low plashes the waves away,
As ever and ever they come and go
With gentle plunge, and backward flow.—
And the sea itself, where his boat would glide
Abandoned to the changing tide

Hour after hour, and he the while
Dream dreams to make the sober smile.
Such was his life by that lonely shore :
And there, ere many weeks were o'er,
He and Madeline met together !
It was when the joyous spring
Was softening into the summer weather,
And swallows ceased their voyaging,
That these two met. Old memories
Of jocund days beneath the trees,
And on the daisy-tufted grass :
The memory of old jubilees
A greeting claims ere yet they pass ;
For each remembers to have been
The little playmate of the other,
Ere foolish strife had fallen between
The kinsmen with whom Madeline
Now dwelt, and Gerald's stately mother.

Eve after eve when the sunset-blush
Amidst the twinkling stars was paling,
And softly fell the twilight-hush,
And rose the round moon upward sailing—

Eve after eve, again they met
Where broke the wave—where breaks it yet—
Upon the solitary shore :
And little by little, thus once more
The intercourse of days gone by
Came back to them unconsciously.

And little by little a tenderer tone
Their voices took ; and in their eyes
A flood of tender sympathies
Long time suppressed, all softly shone,
As heart to heart itself revealed,
And every hidden fount unsealed
From its proud depths. Till all was known
One evening when fair Madeline
Under the dark cliffs stood alone,
And watched the star-beams palely shine
In the clear wave : when suddenly,
A gathering blackness palled the sky
And curtained out each struggling star ;
And the deep thunder moaned afar ;
And on the loosened wind, the cry
Of the scared sea-mew floated by ;

And heavy rain-drops, one by one,
Upon the sands came pattering down ;
And the black ocean, flecked with foam,
Flung back the thunder to the dome
Of the black night piled thickly o'er.
But joy and hope to Madeline,
She sees the well-known boat once more,
Guided by Gerald's daring hand,
Come bounding on, the waves between :
And now its swift prow cuts the shore,
And eagerly he leaps to land.
With her, all thought of pride is o'er ;
And with wild words of tenderness
That all her soul's deep love express,
She clings to him !—and he—
Ah, shield thee, thou poor Madeline,
His beating heart gives back to thine
Too dear an answer ! Tenderly
He breathes her name : and all is known,
Each for the other lives alone !

O rapturous hour of pain and bliss,
Of bliss whose fullness bringeth pain—

Once thou comest, but never I wis
To enter the emptied heart again.
See how it flows, Life's pitiless river :
On it the fragrant heart-leaves fall,
Fall, and are swept for ever and ever
Into the wide waste, one and all !
Unless upon that stormy tide,
As though our lingering course to chide,
Unless they do but haste before
To wait us on that distant shore
Whose glories come in transient gleams
With holiest music softly borne
To the soul in its summer dreams
Under the starry thorn !

Thus all was known—and all life grew
Into one thought of wild deep bliss :
For every thought was merged in this,
They loved ! and that was all they knew
Or felt, or heeded. Nature wore,
At least so seemed it to their eyes,
A sunnier aspect than before ;

And from the earth and sea and skies
A tender joyance filled all space.
And every sight and haunting sound
Of each familiar trysting place
To their young hearts so deeply bound—
The shores that all their vows had known,
The forest-paths star-pierced above—
Told but of that one joy of love,
Of that one wondrous joy alone !

But joy, earth-stained by human touch,
Our human change inheriteth :
Ay, all our heritage of death
Then brands it earthly. And as such
For all its bloom, it perisheth
Even as some poor passion-flower
Life-kissed by Summer's noonday breath,
And dead before the twilight-hour !
And she—our hapless Madeline—
Alas, her one life's-joy is o'er ;
And those bright days that once have been,
Are gone, and gone for evermore.

A ghastly memory lives alone
Of all their ruined brightness now :
Her heart is dead as a dead stone,
Her soul a-weary to be gone
Out of this weary coil below.

* * * * *

Fallen—ay, fallen—but *who* stands
Under God's eye, with spotless hands—
Are *we* so perfect, when all's done ?
O poor scorned creature, sad to see,
Had not this great thronged world for thee
One little touch of charity,
One kindly touch—O shame !—not one ?

* * * * *

But he who brought her to this scorn ?—
Alas, the fierce unsparing sea
Sucked down his cry of agony,
Long months before her babe was born.—
When broke the dawn all ghastly grey,
And sank the sea in sullen moans,

Amongst the rocks the body lay—
Amongst the sea-weed and the stones.

* * * * *

But she lived on—a life apart—
With tearless eye and passive heart,
For the great blow that fell on her
Froze up in one blank dense despair
All thought and feeling. And so passed
Long months away ; until at last
Her child came to her ; and again
Her soul awoke and knew its pain—
Knew how her former friends had flown
Like summer birds from one struck down :
How all, as outraged, shrunk away,
And left her in her ruined day
To brave the bitter world alone.

O wearisome world, so cold and wide !
O wearisome world, so wide and bare !
Where is thy christian sympathy

For pain and pitiless penury :
Thy true heart-kindness, setting aside
Custom's false law, and life's poor pride—
O wearisome world ! can'st answer, where ?

IV.

THE WANDERER.

And this was that same Madeline
Whom in the wild wood we have seen
With her poor babe. Still kneels she there
Beneath the bending linden-tree ;
And still, in her forlorn despair,
Sobs from her heart the one wild prayer
Made eloquent by agony :
“ O loving Lord, the guiltless spare,
And let thine anger fall on me !”
Poor suffering one, it may not be :
And yet, kind Heaven, she doth not know
All the fullness of her woe.
She feels not how that fevered grasp
Within her own convulsive clasp
Grows fainter and fainter ;—nor doth see
The death damp gathering heavily

Upon that little suffering brow.
But life's dull ache ebbs fast : and now,
The blue eyes slowly darken o'er ;
And each poor struggling sigh
Grows feebler than the one before,
Until the last ebbs quietly
Out of the wearied heart !—So went
The suffering spirit well content.

Suddenly, a little bird
Perched on a bough above,
Poured forth its carol to the golden sky !
Surely the heart hath never heard
So jubilant a melody,
A song so full of love.
And downwards on that forest dell
In one rich flood the sunset fell,
And over all its glory shed ;
And through the trees a soft breath stirred
Like a footstep hallowèd :
As though across the sunflush, slowly,
And the wind-stirred grass, were moving
In its glory and its loving,

From God's self, an angel holy—
Onwards, sunwards, softly moving,
Seeking ever in its loving,
For the sinless soul releas'd
From the silent, throbless dead.

But she—the unconscious Madeline,
She knows not yet her hope is gone ;
For Life and Death so long have been
Twin shadows there, they look like one.
Nay, Death is fairer of the two :
For now that all life's pangs are o'er,
Upon that little cheek once more
Comes back a soft and tender hue.—
And so her sobs she strives to stay ;
And sits and sings, and sobs and sings
Like a voice of the forest's murmurings,
A low soft song to that lifeless clay—
Till over her heart a joy doth creep
To think at last the pitying sleep
Hath kissed its weary moans away !
Alas, already her weakened brain
Gives way before its lengthened strain ;

But one fixed thought is ever there,
Standing like a landmark high
Above the mists of her despair,
And urging on unrestingly
Her footsteps weary
O'er the lone paths long and dreary :
Urging on her aching feet
Through the friendless village-street
With its dull and gaping crowd :
Urging her poor footsteps on
Till the distant walls be won
Where dwells that lady high and proud,
Lost Gerald's mother—there to gain
A refuge for his orphaned one,
Ere yet it be
Cast out upon the great world-sea
All helpless and alone !
For well the weary Madeline
Knew for herself there did remain
Of Earth's unrest to come and go,
But a few brief days or so—
A few brief days of bitterness,

Before the grave's forgetfulness
Closed out for her this weary scene.

All night long she wandered on
With that babe-corpse so quiet and cold,
Through the forest weird and old,
By tangled root and mossy stone.
And when in the far-off east there shone
The first faint lustre heralding on
The coming of the golden day,
Still kept she on her weary way.
Feeble of foot, but firm of will,
Her weary way she traversed still,
Through lonely copse whose spectral trees
Sighed sadly in the morning breeze ;
And o'er the bare heath bleak and wide,
And past the rock-strewn mountain-side ;
Still on and on, by moor and stream,
Like one who walks in hideous dream
And strives to stop, but cannot stay—
So passed she on her weary way.

But joy! At last a distant spire
Gleams upward like a line of fire :
Another, and another too,
The winding road brings into view .
And there, at length, before her lies
The goal to which her anxious eyes
Have long been turned. All pleasantly
Basketh that city of her dreams,
In the sun's descending beams—
A goodly city, fair to see.

It is a picture fair to see—
That city with its antique walls,
And old grey towers at intervals,
With here and there a waving tree
Mixed up with many a spire and dome,
And many a quaint old quiet home
On which the sunlight softly falls :
And margining the city round
Low hills with corn all golden-crowned—
Such is that picture fair to see.

The gate is passed, and Madeline now
Stands in the glare of the garish street,
With brain bewildered and aching brow
At the whirl and din of the countless feet
And hurrying crowds that come and go
In one unbroken ceaseless flow.
No one heeds her, scarce an eye
Is turned upon her carelessly,
As sick and faint, all dizzily
She drags her weak limbs on. Once more
She passeth out of the whirl and roar,
Into a quiet garden-square
With children's happy voices gay ;
But misery's aspect even there
Is so familiar grown, none care
A moment from their merry play
To stay, and look on her. And so,
Street after street she traverseth :
Whilst o'er her steps—that ever grow
For all her hope, more sad and slow—
A weakness gathers, as of death.

At last the long-desired spot,
Sought with such grievous toil and pain,
Is reached—but reached, alas ! in vain.
Is this the house ? It weareth not
The aspect that it wore of old—
Unless—O pitying thought !—it be,
That her soul's deep misery
Enmiseries all she doth behold.
Cheerless, desolate, and cold,
Is the aspect that it wears,
That old house known in earlier years :
Then so pleasant-voiced and gay
As though an endless holiday
Held court within its walls. And now—
But what else doth the life-glass shew
Than sorrowful changes !—Sick with fear
Of some new horror, yet unknown,
She leans against the pillar-stone
Of the gate with its gilded bars :
Whilst harshly on the silence jars
The clang of the bell, and its echoes drear
Fall sob-like on her anxious ear.
She listens with suspended breath,

But no one heeds or answereth.
And see—from the gate to the columned door,
The path with weeds is tufted o'er;
And at the sides (now thickly strewn
With corpse-leaves from the poplars blown)
Dead sticks point out where flowers have been :
Only the moss on the border stone
Under the trees looks fresh and green.

Again the echoes of the bell
Ebb into silence. None may tell
That moment's agony and dread—
As sick in soul and desolate,
She stands before the closed gate,
And knows her last fond hope is fled :
Too well, alas ! ere yet she hears
The truth confirm her prophet-fears.
But now—
A poor old creature passing by,
Touched by her silent misery,
Accosts her : and so learns she how
The lady, whom she seeks, departed

Some months before to the far death-land!

“She was a lady proud and grand—

“But died—ah! broken-hearted”—

The garrulous old thing said.

“O, lady dear!

“It was a blow too hard to bear,

“When she heard that her son was dead—

“Drowned in the howling sea—

“Never more she lifted her head,

“But bowed her patiently.

“And soon it came! I saw them pass:

“It was a rare fine sight, alas!

“Velvet, and silver, and nodding plume—

“So they took her to the tomb!”

Silently, with death-damp brow,

Silently, she hears her doom,

And in silence turns away

Ere yet the words—O cruel! cease:—

Pitying heaven, help her now

To some haven where she may

Lie her down, and die in peace.

THE STUDENT.

Beside a path that upward led
Through pleasant pastures fresh and green,
An old house stood, that once had been
A monastery, so men said.
Upon a corn-girt hill it stood
And looked o'er city, field, and wood.
But of its former state, remained
But one low wing of rough grey stone
That like an old rock stood—o'ergrown
With moss and lichens ; and time-stained
With many a sombre tint. But though
Its once proud look long since had faded,
A pleasant aspect still pervaded
Its low carved porch and windows deep,
Each a green bower, o'er which did creep
Bright passion-flowers all a-glow :

And with the slanting sunbeams made
A shifting web of light and shade
Upon the lozenged pane below.—
And far along the lone path-way
To where leapt forth the laughing rill,
Then backwards, over the broken hill,
(Except on the west where the corn-slopes lay)
A massive wall, moss-crowned and grey,
Closed in from all but the gaze of the sky
The garden's waving greenery.

How quiet is the antique room,
Now darkening in the deepening gloom ;
How quiet the dreamer dreaming there—
The floweret still in his hand,
That has led his thoughts all unaware
Into the far dream-land.
The twilight-gloom steals on apace ;
But a windowed door on the garden looks,
And lets in light enough to shew
The calm sad smile on the dreamer's face ;
And the walls of the room all dark with books,
And, piled against the sides below,

Huge coral-forms, and strange-life things,
Awakening up imaginings
Of palm-isles set in a tropic sea.
And at the back, a glittering store
Of instruments. Rare balances,
And lamps, and flasks, and furnaces,
By which men win the golden lore
Time-fruited from old alchemy.
And heaped around on shelf and floor,
Shells rock-entombed, and shining ore,
And mammoth-tooth, and saurian-bone ;
And many a dull discoloured stone,
The use of which she cannot see—
The good old servant, Margery !
But Philip the gardener, her thirty-years' lord,
Puts in for the stones a helping word :
Surely, he says, they cannot be
So useless : for from Him they came,
Who built with them the wondrous frame
Of this great world's immensity.
And if they win our master dear
From buried days of evil cheer,

And lend him but an hour's delight,
On us they have a double claim :
Enough ! replies the good old dame,
My true heart-friend, thou speak'st aright !

They had known that master dear,
Known and nursed him many a year,
Those servants now grown old and grey :
For he, in his bright infancy,
Had often climbed stout Phillip's knee,
And romped with merry Margery
In many a merry play.
And they had watched his young career
With simple faith and loving pride—
Until to them he grew more dear
Than ought in all the world beside.
And now in their calm eventide
To his few wants they still attend,
Half as servant, half as friend.

Already on his brow and face
Had time and suffering left their trace ;

But in his eyes, and in his smile,
The light of youth yet lived a while.
And the rare freshness of the days gone by
Still kept his heart full faithfully :
Although, amidst the living green,
Long-withered hopes that once had been
Life's holiest spells, all thickly clung—
For he had loved when life was young,
With all the pure deep faith of Youth,
With all that heart's strong simple truth :
Loved!—and for two soul-garnered years
He lived as though the world had not
Upon its face a single spot
That ever had known a stain of tears.
Then the dream broke : and blackness fell
Over his life ; for she—ah well,
The world is full of it : 'twas nothing new—
She changed—and soon between the two
There stood a barrier like the grave !

Thus passed the promise that his young life gave,
And he was left hope-wrecked and desolate

To struggle with his weary fate ;
And with a white-robed ghost, that ever,
With thick fair hair and violet eyes,
Stood by his soul, but gave replies
To his passionate breathings—never !
Yet he would not, would not part
With those old memories of his heart,
For all the weary ache they brought it :
They kept its fount of kindness free,
A fount of flowing sympathy,
For other hope-wrecked hearts that sought it.

Such was he who dwelt within
That old stone house ; but he is now
In the garden, where the softened din
Of the city rises faint and low—
Almost like the distant roar
Of surging waves on some lone shore.

The sunset-gleam though lost below
Still lighted up with golden glow
That hill-top garden's quietness,
Where, in the world's forgetfulness,

The student paced him to and fro—
Working with some awakened thought
In whose far depths he sought and sought,
Eagerly half, and half in awe,
The secret of some hidden law
Of some great natural mystery.
And as he walked, there followed him
A little cat, and a mastiff grim :
Grim, but of heart full gentle and kind,
For the old creature did not mind
The gay-one's gambols. Up above,
The mother-cat sat on the limb of a tree,
And looked on all with an eye of love,
And purred and purred contentedly.

In the red west a star arose
Out of the sunset's ebbing splendor :
And its mild radiance, clear and tender,
On the rapt student's musings fell.
Ah well he knew its light : too well !
For he had watched it years ago
With one in that old time—but now,

It came with soothing influence,
So that he could not wish it thence ;
But ever as he walked, he said,
Softly, but with upraised head,
O Lord, I thank thee for these things—
And for the calm that ever flows
Into my heart from Nature's springs.

Why shrinks his soul with sudden start,
And flows the life-blood back upon his heart ?
Is it human, that terrible cry
That arrests his steps with its agony ?
That sound of sorrow and deep soul-pain,
Thick sob following sob : again and again !
That wild heart-cry on the calm eve breaking—
O, poor heart ! thou hast found a bitter aching.

The old dog teareth at the gate,
One, without, is lying there—
Unconscious, pale, and desolate,
And on her breast a babe-corpse fair :
But which is the living, and which the dead,
Mother or child, can scarce be said.

The old dog moaneth piteously,
He licks her face, her faded hands :
Plainly plainly he understands
By some quick natural sympathy,
Sore need is there for charity,
For charity and christian kindness.
Poor dumb brute, in thy soul-blindness,
Thou dost shame these christian lands !
But he who bends above her now
And parts the tresses from that fair young brow,
And lifts her with such tender pitying care ;
He will not cast the trust aside,
That God doth thus to him confide
In that poor waif found lying there.

At his loud cry,
Came forth the good old Margery :
But stood she for a while, apart,
With anxious mind and doubting heart ;
Stood mute awhile—whilst cautious thought
Stern warfare with her feelings wrought.
Then spake she—but with moistened eyes—
“ Dear child, dear master, have a care,

The world is full of wicked lies,
Good sooth ! it hath a lying tongue—
And she, poor child, is very fair,
And you are yet full young.”

“Go to, thou Margery ! I wot
’Tis not thy heart that speakest thus :
The babbling world, what is’t to us ?
And its poor lies ?—go, heed them not !
Remember Christ’s Samaritan
Who helped the wounded by the way—
And let us, in our little day,
Do all the little good we can.”
She answered not, old Margery !
Her heart was full, as full could be :
Her eyes were veiled in tender mist :
She answered not, but bent her down,
And two bright tear-drops fell upon
The pale unconscious cheek she kissed.

And so,
They bore the poor thing in ; and unto her

All needful comfort strove to minister.
And soon she oped anew her soft blue eyes,
And looked around, but murmured no surprise,
She was too weak ! Then housewife Margery
Came with warm broth, and fed her tenderly.
And with kind cheering words and thoughtful care
Looped up the rich bands of her loosened hair
And changed her dust-soiled garments. Till again,
Like an o'erwearied child, she sank to sleep :
And in that slumber calm and deep,
The shadow of dull pain
Passed from her face and delicate brow,
Fled utterly—as though
Out-driven by some holy dream—
And in its place shone tenderly
A loving and a radiant gleam,
A beauty wonderful to see !

And Philip fashion'd a very bower,
A box with fresh moss lined, and many a flower,
For the dead babe. And there
They placed it with kind hearts and pious care,

Until upon the morn it could be taken
Into its churchyard home. How prettily
In its green nest it lay ; and looked—ah, me !
As though it were a blossom newly shaken
By the cold winds from some fair almond-tree.

VI.

THE DREAM OF THE DYING-ONE.

Is it sleep, or holier death ?
More like the trance of death it seems,
So faintly ebbs and flows the breath—
But hark ! she murmurs in her dreams :
Murmurs many a broken word :
But the soft sounds seem to be
As of one in misery
Calling upon Christ, our Lord !

She dreams—and this her dream :
Around her seems a garden fair,
Where palely shines the soft moon-beam
On clustering flowers bright and rare—
With their own beauty's starry gleam

All radiant—and breathing ever
Into the breath of the tremulous air
A fragrance and a longing, never
Known but in that hallowed hour,
When wakes with all its wondrous power,
Its tenderness and mournfulness,
The silent heart-song of the Night.
And birds of rarest loveliness
Arrayed in hues of orient light—
Azure, and golden, and moon-white—
Float 'round and 'round on fearless wing ;
Or hie them to the dark-leaved bowers
(Where panting fawns come wearied of their play),
And sing, and sing,
Amidst the fragrant myrtle-flowers,
The night's uncounted hours away.

Slowly upward sails the moon,
And the night grows bright as a summer's noon ;
Only the light is more holy and tender
Than ever flowed from the noonday's splendor.

And now her dream's bright weavings take
Still brighter semblances—for where
The moon a glittering path has cloven
Through the embowering myrtle-brake,
And gleams the ground like a silver lake,
Young maidens stand ! Calm-eyed, and fair,
In silent groups they gather there.
And others on the darker ground,
With their white robes golden-bound,
Shew upon the jewelled night
With a shining soft and bright ;
Like the lilies interwoven
In the folds of their flowing hair.

Their silent footsteps as they pass
Scarcely bend the plumèd grass,
Nor harm the delicate dewy bells
Of a single tender flower—
Even the frailest that sleeps in their way.
So pass they on—whilst some strange power,
A voiceless will she must obey,
The shrinking Madeline impels

To join their path. But sad, and lonely,
Followeth she in the distance only ;
Slowly followeth afar,
Fearful lest her presence mar,
Lest her step unholy wrong,
The brightness of that angel throng.

So pass they on, until they come
To a river rolling deep and wide :
With tower and temple and columned dome
Upreared upon the farther side—
Tower and dome and temple high,
With pillars of jasper and porphyry
All wrought with delicate tracery,
And garlanded with living flowers
More bright than bloom in earthly bowers.
The fountain-streams that leap below
Take from their tints a tender glow ;
And all the porphyry's purple pride
Grows pale their radiant bloom beside.

A long light arch the river crosses,
Crosses the river from shore to shore :
And below it the wild stream whirls and tosses
In foam-wreaths evermore.
All joyfully, a happy band,
The maidens reach the farther strand ;
But Madeline essays, alas !
In vain the parting flood to pass.
Ere yet her footsteps touch the brink,
Before her in the rushing stream,
She sees the bridge dissolve and sink
Like mists beneath the morning-beam.
Hopeless she stands, whilst over all
Around her, seems sad change to fall.
The leaves shrink up upon the trees,
Blacken, and drop the branches through—
Their rustling in the dreary breeze
Sighs through her soul like memories
Of hopes that long have fallen too.
The soft green grass beneath her foot,
Is seared all down to its strangled root—
The soft grass, and the herb upspringing
In its young beauty, fresh and gay—

And through the dim cold distance winging,
(Hushed for that drear scene their singing)
Sail the cruel birds away !

But, on the other, happier shore
Beyond the raging waters' roar,
Beyond that wildly-flowing river,
All things a radiant aspect wear :
And through the soft blue sea of air
Bright angel-forms are floating ever.
But these she sees not, sees no more—
For every eager sense is bent
In mingled love and wonderment,
On one, more bright, that stands before.
Upon the river's brink it stands
And calls to her with outstretched hands—
Her own, her little one ! O cruel dream !
Between them flows the pitiless stream,
Flows, and flows ever ! In her misery,
Her wild heart-grief and agony,
She kneels, and calls imploringly
On HIM above—
On HIM, all mercy and all love—

The listening, all-forgiving LORD,
Who, in his ever-living WORD,
Has spoken for our comforting,
That he will not turn away
From those who come to him, and pray
In penitence and suffering.

Her prayer is answered. All around her takes
Its former aspect ; and a Glory breaks,
A Glory and a golden Gleaming
In one bright flood of splendour streaming,
On the curbed waters. And within it stands
ONE who takes her palm-prest hands,
And raises her, and whispereth
Poor child, thy sins are lost in death,
All is forgiven now.—And so,
Across the calmèd stream they go :
Across the stream as though it were
A crystal floor their steps to bear—
And now her little-one is clinging
Close to her heart ! And all around,
Upriseth from that holy ground

A joyous and a holy singing—
Up-echoeth from shore to shore
A song of praise and happiness—
At one sad heart the less,
One living soul the more !

Slowly rolls the night away,
And breaks the morning bright and gay.
Fills all the room its fresh sweet breath,
Fills all the room the morning's glow—
As round the bed they stand and know
The holy calm of death !
Unshadowed by the life's eclipse,
All calmly slept the lovely dead :
And on her gently-parted lips
There lingered yet, a little while,
A tender and a holy smile—
Left, when the spirit fled.

H. J. C.

SOME ADDITIONAL POEMS.*

A CANADIAN SUMMER'S-NIGHT.

I.

The purple shadows dreamingly,
Upon the dreaming waters lie,
And darken with the darkening sky.

Calmly across the lake we float
I and thou, my little boat—
The lake with its grey mist-capote.

* The covers of this volume having been ordered from a distance before the main poem was in type, it was found, on their arrival in Toronto, that they would carry a few extra leaves. Hence the addition of these two accompanying pieces.

We lost the moon an hour ago :
We saw it dip, and downward go,
Whilst all the West was still a-glow.

But in those blue depths moon-forsaken,
A moon-like star its place hath taken :
And one by one the rest awaken.

II.

With noiseless paddle-dip we glide
Along the bay's dark-fringèd side,
Then out---amidst the waters wide !

With us there floated here last night
Wild threatening waves with foam-caps white,
But these have now spent all their might.

We knew they would not injure us,
Those tossing waves, so boisterous—
And where is now their fret and fuss ?

Only a ripple wrinkleth now
The summer lake—and plashes low
Against the boat, in fitful flow.

III.

Still callest thou—thou Whip-poor-Will !*
When dipped the moon behind the hill
I heard thee, and I hear thee still.

But mingled with thy plaintive cry
A wilder sound comes ebbing by,
Out of the pine-woods, solemnly.

It is the blinking owls that sit
Up in the trees, and wait a-bit,
Ere yet along the shores they flit.

And hark, again ! It comes anew—
Piercing the dark pine-forest through,
With its long too-hoo, too-hoo !

* "Whipowill" is, we believe, the orthodox orthography ; but the other is the more popular of the two.

IV.

Swifter and swifter, on we go ;
For though the breeze but feigns to blow,
Its kisses catch us, soft and low.

But with us now, and side by side,
Striving awhile for place of pride,
A silent, dusky form doth glide.

Though swift and light the birch-canoe,
It cannot take the palm from you,
My little boat, so trim and true.

“ Indian ! where away to-night ” ?
“ Homewards I wend : yon beacon-light
Shines out for me—good-night ! ” “ Good-night ! ”

V.

Shorewards again we glide—and go
Where the sumach shadows flow
Across the purple calm below.

There, the far-winding creeks among,
The frogs keep up, the summer long,
The murmurs of their soft night-song.

A song most soft and musical—
Like the dulled voice of distant Fall,
Or winds that through the pine-tops call.

And where the dusky swamp lies dreaming,
Shines the fire-flies' fitful gleaming—
Through the cedars—dancing, streaming!

VI.

Who is it hideth up in a tree
Where all but the bats asleep should be,
And with his whistling mocketh me?

Such quaint, quick pipings—two-and-two :
Half a whistle, half a coo—
Ah, Mister Tree-Frog ! *gare-à-vous* !

The owls on noiseless wing gloom by,
Beware, lest one a glimpse espy
Of your grey coat and jewelled eye—

And so, good-night!—We glide anew
Where shows the lake its softest blue
With mirrored star-points sparkling through.

VII.

The lights upon the distant shore
That shone so redly, shine no more :
The Indian-fisher's toil is o'er.

Already in the eastern skies,
Where up and up new stars arise,
A pearly lustre softly lies.

And time it were for us to take
Our homeward course across the lake,
Ere yet the tell-tale morn awake.

O Night—where old shape-hauntings dwell,
Though now, calm-eyed:—for thy soft spell,
O soothing Night ! I thank thee well.

THE POOR MIGNON.

1.

Fill high the cup, fair Mignon !
With Rhine-wine mantling bright—
For with its old sad yearnings
My soul grows sad to-night.
And this true wine must chase me
The phantom Past away—
For see, already through the woods
Comes reddening up the day,

Mignon !

The battle-bearing day !

2.

Beside the watch-fire, sadly,
Thus spoke the soldier-youth :
And Mignon thought—hast thou too, loved ?
Nay now, it is a truth !

She filled---the pretty Mignon—
The wine up-sparkled clear—
And sparkled up in Mignon's eyes
A something like a tear,

Mignon !

Something like a tear !

3.

The watch-fires slowly paled away,
And slowly rose the sun ;
And then the distant roaring told
Of war's fell work begun.
But gallantly those gay French hearts
Marched on to battle—crying
Ah Mignon, wait till we get back,
A kiss shall cure your sighing,

Love !

A kiss shall cure your sighing !

4.

All day the surging battle swayed
Its red waves to and fro :

Till redder than the evening skies
The death-field flushed below.
But with the night again came down
A stillness wide and lonely,
As Mignon searched among the dead
For one she thought of only,

O!

For him she thought of only!

5.

Half-way up the glacis front
Upon the wreck-strewn ground,
His fair young breast all red with blood
She found him,—and she found
Upon that breast, blood-dabbled too,
A lock of long fair hair :
And through her tears the brave girl said—
“Nay, still shall it rest there,

Poor heart !

Still, shall it rest there !”

6.

And so, his comrades buried him,
Wrapped in his coat of grey,
Under a little hawthorn-bush
That blossomed where he lay :
The only one that stood amidst
The dreadful wreck around—
And Mignon breathed his burial-prayer,
As on the closèd ground
 She knelt,
 And kissed the closèd ground.

THE END.

